Simon ſifted by Satan as Wheat, and upheld by the Lord.

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE NEW JERUSALEM TEMPLE,

IN *RED-CROSS-STREET*,

NEAR CRIPPLEGATE, LONDON,

Feb. 20, 1796=40,

On LUKE XXII. 31, 32.

AND THE LORD SAID, SIMON, SIMON, BEHOLD, SATAN HATH DESIRED TO HAVE YOU, THAT HE MAY SIFT YOU AS WHEAT: BUT I HAVE PRAYED FOR THEE, THAT THY FAITH FAIL NOT.

BY MANOAH SIBLY, N.H.S.
AND SERVANT OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

London.

PRINTED BY R. HINDMARSH,
PRINTER TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES,
OLD-BAILEY.

And Sold by the AUTHOR, No. 35, Goſwell-ſtreet; at the Temple, Red-Croſs-ſtreet; and by all Bookſellers in Town and Country.

1796=40.

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SERMON VI.

SIMON SIFTED BY SATAN AS WHEAT,

AND

UPHELD BY THE LORD.

LUKE XXII. 31, 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

THAT the Word of the Lord is of no private interpretation, and whatever was written before-time, was written for our instruction, is a maxim well known in the church; consequently would we derive the benefit which a gracious and merciful God has designed towards us, in giving us the Word, we must consider it's contents either as applicable to the state of the church at large, or particularly to ourselves,

either as being it's worthy or unworthy members; for wherever the Word is, there is the church; and it may be worthy our conſideration, that there is no part of the Word of the Lord but we may ſo apply either in a way of reproof to our evil ſelfhood, inſtruction in the way we ought to walk, or comfort to our inner man, made after the image of God in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. Agreeable to which maxim, we will endeavour to ſpeak to the words of our text.

Where firſt and foremoſt we behold the Lord, *And* THE LORD *ſaid unto Simon.* Paul obſerves, that there are Gods many, and Lords many, but unto us there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptiſm. That the one Lord, whom Paul there fixes his eye upon, is the Lord in our text, I ſhould think is evident to a demonſtration, if we compare what he ſays reſpecting our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in his Epiſtle to the Coloſſians, That in him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily: even the ſame perſon, who, as the Jehovah in the Old Teſtament, declared

clared that he would become the Saviour and Redeemer, and beſides whom there is no God.

One reaſon why the word, Jehovah, was not uſed in the New Teſtament, when ſpeaking of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, appears to be, becauſe the name of Jehovah was not uttered by the Jews, although written in their books; but for it they always ſubſtituted, in reading, the word Adonai; a word importing the ſame as Lord. The word, Jehovah, being in itſelf of too ſacred a nature for ſuch a vile race to utter with their tongues, therefore they do not pronounce the word to this day. But the more interior reaſon is, becauſe Jehovah is a name more applicable to the divine, in regard to his eſſence, than to his form; leading our minds, when we would view the ſpirit it contains, to the nature of the divine in his firſt principles, whereby he was not, nor agreeable to divine order could, become THE LORD, the ruler and governor of the univerſe, immediately from himſelf, as in his firſt and laſt principles united, in

which

which we now ſee JEHOVAH in the perſon of THE LORD, who ſpake in our text. Hence Jehovah having now fully become the governor of the univerſe, in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, he is emphatically called the Lord, and that with the greateſt propriety.

That Jehovah, under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, and the Lord, in the New, is the ſame perſon, according to what we have already obſerved, may be fully proved from the many quotations from the Old Teſtament in the New; wherein the word, Jehovah, is always rendered Lord. Thus when our Lord, in Luke iv. 17, and following, refers thoſe to whom he was preaching in the ſynagogue, to what the prophet Iſaiah ſays of him, *When he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The ſpirit of the Lord is upon me:* a quotation from Iſaiah i. 1, where for the word Lord we find *the Lord God*, which in the Hebrew is Adonai Jehovah, *the Lord Jehovah*. So alſo at the cloſe of the quotation in the 19th verſe of that ſame chap. of Luke, we read, *the acceptable year of the Lord*, which in the

Old

Old Teſtament is Jehovah. Abundant more paſſages might be cited, but theſe may ſuffice to prove who the Lord in our text is, namely, none other than the great God of heaven and earth, the one only Jehovah from eternity, who in time manifeſted himſelf in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt.

We now come to the perſon addreſſed. *And the Lord ſaid,* SIMON, SIMON. Simon was the name of the apoſtle Peter before the Lord called him, and he became one of his diſciples; and in it's ſignification to a ſtate of the church, bears the ſame repreſentation, referring to the church in reſpect to her faith; and, abſtractedly conſidered, faith itſelf.

That this is the meaning of Simon and of Peter, in the ſpiritual ſenſe, where qualities only are ſeen and the perſon diſappears, may be proved in the firſt inſtance from the very change of the name which the Lord gave him from Simon to that of Peter; the word itſelf, being explained, meaning a rock, which in the Word is always predicated of

truth

truth in reſpect to the Lord, or faith in regard to men; and juſtly compared to a rock, becauſe when it is the faith of truth, it is a ſhield—a defence for the ſoul againſt ſtorms and tempeſts, whether from within or from without—againſt all aſſaults of our ſpiritual enemies, even when the blaſt of the terrible ones is as a ſtorm againſt the wall. But when the faith of the falſe, founded upon erroneous principles, it is like a barren rock in the midſt of the ocean, upon which the poor mariner being caſt, finds no food, no ſhelter, nor any thing uſeful to the ſupport or ſuſtenance of life, in which caſe death at length inevitably enſues.

In the next place it may be ſeen that Simon Peter, as a repreſentative of ſome particular in the church, correſponds to her faith, from the contents of our text itſelf, faith being the very burden of the whole. Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath deſired to have you, that he may ſift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that *thy faith* fail not: evidently manifeſting, that our Lord thus ſpake to Peter in regard to his faith,

and

and the attack that Satan would make upon it.

The reaſon that the Lord repeats Simon, Simon, is, becauſe faith, in it's nature and progreſs in the ſoul, is twofold; a faith of the underſtanding, and a faith of the will. In the progreſs of regeneration, and when the church is about to be eſtabliſhed, the faith of the underſtanding precedes the faith of the will. Faith may be ſaid to be of the underſtanding, whilſt from a principle of good man is learning and imbibing truths; and it may be ſaid to be of the will, when man puts the truths which he has imbibed, into practice of life, and thereby elevates them into his affections; until which, faith does not become of a ſaving nature to the ſoul. But when the church is on the decline, the faith of the will precedes the faith of the underſtanding, until at length there is not any charity or the affection of truth in the will, and then there cannot exiſt any faith of truth in the underſtanding, but the faith of the falſe, which in this caſe becomes faith alone—a dead

faith—a carcaſe without poſſeſſing a living ſoul, and the poſſeſſor is ſpiritually dead to all the good and true things of heaven and the church. Hence the reaſon why our Lord repeated the name of Simon. From whence alſo we may be led to ſee, that there is not a word ſpoke vainly in the ſacred ſcriptures, but all contain ſome divine or heavenly arcana, had we but eyes to ſee, and hearts diſpoſed to live accordingly.

The next thing worthy of our notice is the word *behold*; a note of attention and remark, as well as implying the certainty of the thing mentioned.

It is a mark here to put us on our guard againſt the ſnares laid in our way, againſt the enemies to the welfare of our ſouls. It was letting Simon know, and it is letting us know, that the enemy is near at hand, that he is ever on the watch to trip up our heels and lay us groveling in the duſt; that he is like a roaring lion going about ſeeking whom he may devour; therefore in the book of the Revelations he is called the old ſerpent,

pent. It is an item that we ought ever to be on our watch-tower againſt his devices; which watch-tower is, in all we do, think, or ſay, to keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and man; and when temptations from hell aſſault, impute them to hell from whence they originally flow; at the ſame time give all praiſe to the Lord, from whom alone is all power to reſiſt and overcome them.

The word, behold, here alſo beſpeaks the certainty of temptations from hell aſſaulting whoever will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus. The reaſon is, becauſe no man as to his own ſelfhood is pure; on the contrary, in himſelf he is nothing but a ſink of ſin and iniquity—a little hell, and (to uſe a homely phraſe) has a deal of the devil's tinder about him; and the enemy continually throwing his firebrands around, it is almoſt impoſſible but ſome muſt catch, and he is ſure to level the attack upon the weakeſt quarter. Therefore we are now called upon to behold, to look about us, to put ourſelves on our guard, becauſe the approach of the enemy

is certain, I mean the devil and ſatan, the enemy of our immortal ſouls and all the Lord's lovely works.

Now comes the fact laid before us, and the form of the trial to our faith. Satan has deſired to have you, that he may ſift you as wheat. Temptations are what are here meant by the ſifting. They are of two general kinds; firſt, as to the reception of truth, and ſecondly, as to the reception of good. Therefore we find the infernal ſpirits, from whence all temptations originate, ſometimes in the Word called the devil, and ſometimes ſatan; the devil with regard to what is evil, and ſatan with regard to what is falſe; and called both when ſpoken of with regard to evil and the falſe; which, as one infernal monſter, make up the univerſal hell. They are called both in the fore-cited paſſage in the Revelations, ch. xx. 2, where we are told that *the angel laid hold of the dragon, and that old ſerpent which is the devil and ſatan, and bound him a thouſand years*: the angel being the Lord alone, who led captivity captive, and of the people there were none with

with him; the devil and the ſatan whom he bound being the hoſts of diabolic and ſatanic ſpirits, whom he conquered and ſubjugated in his ſecond advent, by his almighty arm.

That the word, Satan, is uſed particularly in regard to what is falſe, and ſpoken in relation to temptations or aſſaults from hell as to the underſtanding of truth, may be proved from what our Lord ſaid to Peter, upon a time he had been proclaiming the truth of his ſufferings to his diſciples, in Matt. xvi. 21, 22, 23. *From that time Jeſus began to ſhew unto his diſciples, how that he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many things of the elders, and chief prieſts, and ſcribes, and be killed, and be raiſed again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, ſaying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this ſhall not be unto thee. But he turned, and ſaid unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of men.* Where it is evident that Peter is here called Satan by our Lord, becauſe

becauſe he repreſented faith, and here in this particular inſtance is rebuking our Lord, becauſe he had declared the truth concerning himſelf, which Peter would not believe. For to ſuch who are in the faith of the falſe—a faith not grounded in genuine truth—a faith which has not charity for it's riſe, and good works for it's end, the Lord's paſſion of the croſs, as to Peter here, is indeed the great ſtumbling-block and the rock of offence: ſuch making all religion to conſiſt in faith alone, they depend upon the paſſion of the croſs as the price of their redemption, not knowing, nor are they willing to believe, that the paſſion of the croſs was no more in regard to the work of redemption, than the laſt combat, in which the Lord conquered the infernals, and at the ſame time entered into a full union of the divine and human in his own perſon. The rejection of this truth, is the rebuke that is put upon the Lord, by the Satans principled in faith alone; for they are looking for a ſalvation without, and not for a ſalvation within; therefore, as obſerved, they cannot embrace any other idea as to the way of ſalvation,

vation, than that it is by the paſſion of the croſs, as the price of their redemption to the Father. Thus alſo ſplitting the Deity into ſeparate Gods, or at leaſt into ſeparate perſons, (which in the mind is ſeparate Gods, however the mouth may ſpeak) from whence at length is not left to the man one ſpiritual truth of heaven, or the church. Our Lord ſays to ſuch, who are thus offended at the truth of the paſſion of the croſs, that is, thoſe who cannot ſee it to be the cloſing ſcene of redemption, and the glorification of the divine human: *Thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of men.*

If we can but bring our minds heartily to conſent to that grand fundamental truth, That there is but one only living and true God, thoſe ideas of redemption and ſalvation, by the price of our Saviour's ſufferings, muſt fall to the ground. It may then be aſked, Why did he ſuffer the paſſion of the croſs? For the very preciſe reaſon as he came into the world; it was nothing but the maternal human which ſuffered, the eſ-

ſential

ſential divine, and the divine human, being above the ſphere of temptation; and Jehovah himſelf came into the world to endure that proceſs of ſuffering in the maternal human, not that thereby he might purchaſe our ſoul's ſalvation of the Father, but that whilſt he was purging himſelf of all the infirmities which cleaved unto him, in conſequence of the external hereditary corruption which he imbibed from Mary's womb, he might combat and ſubjugate the hells with which thoſe corruptions were united, and at the ſame time elevate the human divine principle, which was always from him, but alone as yet in the creature, as the ſpark, the outgoings of the infinite and eternal, that he might unite the human divine thus glorified, to the eternal divine, whereby he became the divine human in his own perſon, powerful to ſave all men from their ſins (not in them) who deſire to love him and keep his commandments.

The paſſion of the croſs was the laſt ſtruggle the Lord endured with the infirm maternal human; therefore we hear him ſay on the

the croſs, It is finiſhed; then bows his head and gives up the ghoſt; lays down the remains of the infirm human in the grave, and riſes with the divine human fleſh and bones complete, the God-Man of heaven and earth.

I own I have in ſome degree digreſſed from the immediate ſubject of our text, but it will yet ſerve as an illuſtration of the name Satan being given to Peter, alluding to the faith of the falſe, which is faith alone, and always flies to the paſſion of the croſs for it's only prop—it's only hope and dependence for heaven. And it will likewiſe ſerve as a medium of ſelf-examination as to our faith, whether it is the faith of the falſe, or the faith of truth. That faith, no matter how brilliantly decorated, is moſt aſſuredly the faith of the falſe, which does not lead us in every action of our lives to examine them by a good conſcience. Our underſtandings are not given us for to exerciſe in dry reaſonings and mere ſpeculations, but to inform ourſelves in the things of love to God and charity to man; and wherever

that is not the caſe, the underſtanding is blind, no other principle being able to open the underſtanding to the reception of genuine truth. Such, however they may judge of themſelves, are aſſociated with Satans, and without they break off their ſins by righteouſneſs in time, and their iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor, that is, ſuffering the Lord to guide them by the dictates of his holy Word, they will finally become Satans themſelves in thoſe dark regions beneath, where the light of truth never enters. To their comfort therefore our text ſays, of thoſe Satans—thoſe falſe ſpirits of hell, who are aſſociated with every one of us by nature, that they deſire to have the Simons to ſift them as wheat; Simon, Simon, Satan deſires to have you, that he may ſift you as wheat. This beſpeaks the malice of the infernals, and their deſigns againſt the ſoul of man; they luſt to have every man in their captive chains, that thereby they may, if poſſible, deface the Maker's image, and plunge the ſoul into the ſame depths of ſin and iniquity with themſelves. This is the luſt of hell towards every ſon and daughter

of

of Adam, and the design of Satan herein is, that he may sift us as wheat; wheat in the Word always representing goods from the Lord, and here, as our text is treating of the christian engaged in the spiritual warfare, the good of charity.

Man by nature is all disorder: there is some good, it is true, in every man, whilst in the land of hope, but in the natural man it is mixed, or more properly, covered over with evil and falshood, and which cannot appear but in proportion as in the sifting the chaff is separated from the wheat. There is nothing that the evil spirits can apply themselves to in us but the chaff, thereby hoping so to pound the wheat that it may be dispersed with the chaff, which is from ourselves and hell. The satanic spirits, the enemies of our souls, apply themselves to all the natural prejudices—to all the visible appearances of effects, in order to prevent the mind from entering into genuine truth by investigating causes. It will sift a thousand ways, in ten thousand different forms, in order, if possible, to keep the mind tied

down to ſenſual and worldly objects. But there is a wiſe ſuperintendant above, an omnipreſent God that reigns in heaven, a merciful high prieſt in his divine human, that whilſt here below, ſuffered himſelf in our nature to be tempted in all things like unto his brethren, that he might know how to ſuccour them that are tempted; the LORD in our text, who firſt gives us a word of advice, who knows how, and is always ready at hand, to bring the greateſt poſſible good out of the greateſt evil, nay, more than that, turns all evil into good, to ſuch as put their truſt in him.

This ſifting of the ſoul by Satan, as wheat, will appear at firſt ſight as an evil, and in reality it is ſo, in regard to the intention of hell; but if this ſifting did not take place, the wheat would never be diſcovered, the good by nature blended with the evil, would not be expoſed to the view of the mind, there would no ſeparation take place, the mind would go on ſtill ſettled on nature's lees, all in chaos and confuſion. But this deſire of the ſatanic ſpirits, to aboliſh

every

every principle of goodneſs and truth by their diabolic, artful, and ſecret inſinuations, nay and ſo ſecret that often for the time they are unknown to the man, the LORD makes a means of bringing goodneſs into ſome order, that the good and truth may be ſet before the man, as well as the evil and falſhood, and from liberty according to reaſon he may chuſe for himſelf; and when this is done, to counterballance the ſtill evil ſuggeſtions from hell, who will never give up their infeſtation until the man has arrived to the church triumphant above, we are now told by the Lord, that he has prayed for us, that our faith fail not.

To underſtand ſomething of the true meaning of which, (as has been obſerved) we muſt regard the Deity included ſolely in one perſon, in whom is contained the complete trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This point we ought never to loſe ſight of, whenever we contemplate any thing reſpecting the Lord, either as to his perſon, eſſence, or operations: for this is the firſt truth of heaven,

heaven, agreeable to the anſwer of the ſcribe to our Lord, in Mark xii. 32, *There is but one God, and none but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the underſtanding, and with all the ſoul, and with all the ſtrength, and to love his neighbour as himſelf, is more than all whole burnt offerings and ſacrifices.*

Taking this unity of the Godhead into our idea, we ſhall clearly ſee the folly of the doctrine of thoſe who ſuppoſe the Lord's praying, to conſiſt in his interceding to the Father for the elect, or thoſe who act faith on the paſſion of the croſs. For as there is but one God in one perſon, reigning in heaven, even Jehovah Jeſus alone, it becomes us, would we be wiſe in ſpiritual things, to ſeek out a more rational and ſcriptural hypotheſis.

And when we conſider that Jehovah himſelf aſſumed the human, and made it the divine human, in order that he might be in a capacity to come down to man's fallen eſtate, and elevate the chiefeſt of ſinners to himſelf,

himself, we then see what it is that prays, that intercedes, and mediates, between the naked Jehovah, the essential divine, and fallen man; it is that divine human with which Jehovah is invested in the person of Jesus Christ, that thereby he might be able to save all that come thereby to the Father in him, make him their door, approach him as the visible God, whom the eye of the understanding can see, and by that medium be elevated to the invisible, whom no man has seen at any time or can see, and who is alone manifested by and in the Son.

Hence we see wherein we may understand our Lord's meaning, when he told Peter, I have prayed for thee: and we are to remember, that whatever he did for Peter, he does for us, for he is no respecter of persons; that it is not, as we have hitherto believed in the days of darkness and ignorance, before the unsealing of the Word, one God interceding to another, to be merciful. But now, seeing Jehovah Jesus all and in all, in person, essence, and operation, we view the human as the intercessor, or that

in

in which he is ſaid to pray, becauſe in that the eſſential divine being Omega as well as Alpha, is for ever all-powerful to carry on the firſt purpoſes of his heart, to ſave his creature, and counteract all the deſigns of Satan and the devil againſt them, however he may deſire to ſift them as wheat, and to deſtroy all the good of love, and thence all the faith of truth. The Lord can defend his own in the man, whether love or faith, againſt every fiery dart from hell; and however the temptation may be long, however it may ſeem as if the Lord had forgotten to be gracious, and will be favourable no more, yet we have to reflect that in him is all power, and his omniſcience is watching every opportunity to employ it on our behalf, for his eſſence is pure love itſelf; and however the ſifting time—the time of temptation—our probationary ſtate, is grievous, yet it will at length yield the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs, to them that are exerciſed thereby, if we faint not, give not up the conteſt until our foes are laid beneath our feet. To the attainment of which, let us remember we are called to act to our beſt

ability

ability in the preſent moment, to uſe the talents we have to our Maker's glory and our neighbour's good; our merciful Maker and Saviour requires no more; he expects according to what we have, that is, according to the power which he gives us, to perform, and not according to what we have not. High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, are here equally on a ballance, in regard to acceptance with their Maker. He never gathers where he has not ſtrawed, nor reaps where he has not ſown; therefore, on his head alone, the crown ought finally by us to be put. Purſuing this our courſe, we ſhall paſs through our probation time here below, reſting on his all-powerful arm, until at length our chaff will be bound up in bundles and burnt; and we, as the Lord's wheat, thus ſeparated from the chaff, gathered into the heavenly garner above, where we ſhall, amidſt the wonderous ſcenes ever opening new, more fully ſee the uſe of our ſifting times in the wilderneſs below, whilſt in humble adoration and gratitude we bleſs the love, the wiſdom,

and the providence that directed all our footsteps, however at the time the hand was unseen.

Now to our Lord Jesus Christ be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

10 JY 60

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